

# SAT-ACT nose dive: an educational crisis?

By Steve Parman

*"The quality of Public education has taken a big nose-dive."*

Mr. David Wood, Dean of Admissions, Vanderbilt University

*"Perhaps the tests are measuring skills which are no longer essential to being a well-educated person."*

Mr. William Smyth, Dean of Admissions, University of Tennessee

*From 1966 to 1975 the national average verbal and mathematical Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores declined from 466 to 434 and 492 to 472, respectively (scores range from 200 to 800).*

*From 1965 to 1974, the average composite American College Testing Assessment (ACT) scores have dropped from 19.9 to 18.7 (on a scale of 1 to 36).*

What is happening? Is there a decline in the quality of American education? Do declining standardized test scores reflect upon American schools or upon basic changes working in our TV-ridden culture? Will the test-score slump end? Will a return to "basics" solve the problem?

The most disturbing aspect of the lower scoring trend is the fact that it gains rapidity yearly. For the SAT, last year's ten-point downward shift in verbal scores and the eight-point math score decline were the largest drops in the test's history; (however, MBA scores showed no decline).

Likewise, in 1974-75, ACT declines greater than the per-year average over the previous decade were recorded.

Both the College Entrance Board and the ACT Program have created special committees to study the problem. Predictably, the various research efforts have attributed the apparent

educational crisis to a number of relatively diverse factors. The study sponsored by the ACT Program and conducted by Leo A. Munday lends credence to the two most basic explanations: the "changed pool of students" theory and the theory of academically weaker high school students.

The "changed pool" concept relates to the reduced selectivity of students now attending college. According to this explanation, when many students having weaker academic backgrounds than the traditional college-bound student take the tests, the average scores tend to decline.

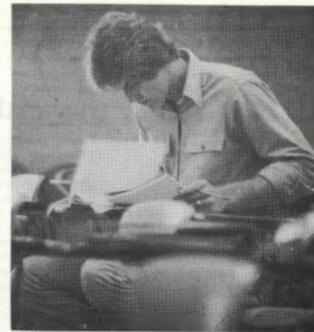
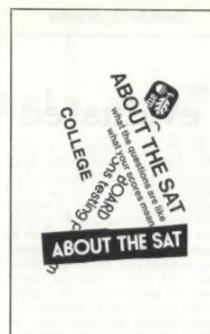
In point of fact, the consensus of researchers is that score declines for all the other standardized tests correspond closely to the drops for college-bound students.

However, educators are more concerned over the evidence of a simple decline in academic quality on the high school level.

Many attribute this decline to a decreasing emphasis on basic writing, reading, and mathematical skills in American schools. Wood is concerned over the trend in which such subjects as "bachelor living" (male home economics) are made a part of high school curricula.

A similar view is held by Stanford University Dean of Admissions, Fred A. Hargadon. In an interview conducted by the Educational Testing Service, Hargadon cites a general lowering of standards for reading and writing as a cause of educational decline in high schools. "Perhaps students are not being asked to write frequently enough; more likely, perhaps the standards to which they are held for what they do write are simply set too low."

Richard Cashwell, the Dean of Admissions of the University of North Carolina affirms Hargadon's viewpoint: "My high-school-aged



children don't have to write as much, don't have to express themselves on paper as much, and spend a lot more time watching TV."

Television as a social phenomenon is another object of blame for the decline in test scores and the supposed drop in the quality of American secondary education. The major criticism levied by television's attackers is that the medium relegates the viewer to a passive, non-participatory role. According to Dean Hargadon, "TV's worst feature is the time it takes away from other kinds of activities. . . . Reading a worthwhile book, for instance, requires an effort on the part of the reader; TV does not."

In another view of the complex situation, Wood advocates the "changed pool of students" theory to account for lower standardized test scores: "Nobody ever gets failed and, as a result, you have people up in the junior and senior [classes] ready to take the tests who are not prepared as they would have been years ago."

To improve the quality of American secondary education, Wood suggests, "Fail people. . . . and get rid of a lot of frill courses that sound good but really don't do that much in the way of education."

Dean Smyth credits changing attitudes toward standardized tests and toward high school education as possible reasons for lower test scores. First, he theorizes that women's lib fosters a vocational orientation among high school girls: "With women's lib, careers are opening up for girls, and they come

through secondary education without the in-depth science courses, and so forth."

Second, he believes that students are simply no longer very worried about their test scores: "These tests are being used for placement now a lot more than for admission. In years past, when a student realized that his getting into school depended on his test scores, he went into his tests with the adrenalin flowing." Smyth indicates that, at present, the de-emphasis on test scores in college admissions has led to a more casual attitude on the part of students. Smyth suggests that this attitude is also a result of the widespread belief that "perhaps the tests are measuring skills which are no longer essential to being a well-educated person."

Indeed, at many colleges, standardized test scores are apparently regarded at best as only approximate indications of academic aptitude. Albert Gooch, the Dean of Admissions of the University of the South, maintains that "all SAT scores have to do for us is convince us that a person is a cut above the average ability."

Cashwell concurs that the SAT has a limited usefulness in the determination of academic potential: "At North Carolina, we would much rather have a kid that's first in his class at MBA with, say, a total SAT score of 700 than a kid who was the last in the class with 1500."

Whether or not declining standardized test scores really reflect lower quality in American secondary education may be a moot

question. There is some evidence that test scores will possibly rise by 1980.

In an article entitled "The End of the I.Q. Slump", social psychologist Carol Tavris attributes the trend of lower test scores to the "baby boom" of the 1950's. She refers to a study by psychologist Robert B. Zajonc, who defines intelligence as an absolute intellectual level which increases with age.

According to Zajonc's findings, in large families the intellectual environment is less conducive to a child's development than in small families. "What happens," writes Tavris, "is that the intellectual level of each additional child is diluted by his contact with young siblings who have not reached full adult intelligence." Tavris concludes that when children born after the 1950's population boom begin to be tested (perhaps 1980), the SAT and other test scores will begin to rise.

In spite of such optimism, and regardless of widespread disbelief in the validity of some standardized tests, many educators are deeply concerned about the prospects of American education.

In fact, a committee called the Council for Basic Education (CBE) is currently working toward restoration of more basic curricula to public education. The *CBE Bulletin* (March 1976) affirms the viewpoint of the Council: "We believe that it [the "back to basics" movement] is also the rediscovery that some purposes of education are more valid than others, and that demonstrable academic achievement is worthwhile."



## The Bell Ringer

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## Viewpoints

## Presidential contenders evaluated

A Democrat's View

By Ben Cohen

It is really amazing that the Republican primary should have generated such intense interest this year, since the candidates running are so similar. They share numerous traits, including reactionary conservatism, utter incompetence, and a paradoxical combination of mulish obstinacy and frantic opportunism, that has turned public policy into a goulash and left vital decisions in the hands of the menagerie collected in and around the White House during Nixon's last days.

Ronald Reagan's apprenticeship for the Presidency began, if my memory serves me, at Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, when he starred opposite Barbara Stanwyck in *Sunset in Montana*. Since this auspicious start, he has acted in several dozen other films. He married in the early 1950's to a woman that he first met when he had inadvertently put her on a blacklist as being procommunist. Surprisingly, Reagan's marriage has outlasted his attempts to purge the screen of subservient influences.

In the mid-1950's, Reagan came into the employ of the General

Electric Company as a public relations expert; and, in that capacity, he visited thousands of factories making speeches, presumably criticizing Westinghouse. In the early 1960's, Reagan hosted *Death Valley Days* for Borax Company.

At this point, having become fabulously wealthy, Reagan decided to run for governor. He ran on a platform of decentralization of government, lower taxes, and a smaller budget, and unfortunately won. It speaks poorly for California that the man they knew only as a spokesman for Forty Mule Team Boraxo soap (or whatever it was) gained access to the highest office in the state.

As to his record, once he got there, it was very uneventful; but we can perhaps gain some insight into Reagan from his actions as governor. In the first place, California's budget increased at a faster rate under Reagan than under any previous administration, and this was with a submissive legislature. Under his administration, likewise contrary to his promises, counties lost almost all control of their own taxes and funding; henceforth, their money and instructions on how to use it would come from Sacramento.

By general consensus of those who had to work with him, Reagan's chief talents were in composing speeches, throwing well-timed tantrums in front of legislators, and planning his \$1 million plus inaugural celebration. Little is known about his vacuous, meandering policies and platforms, fortunately for him. California voters were not amused when, in support of Barry Goldwater, Reagan suggested ending the progressive income tax; and he has learned from his experience. His only really glaring blunder recently was when he suggested that the government transfer \$90 billion worth of programs to the states, and the federal taxes that pay for the programs, and then not raise local taxes.

I will leave the task of determining which of the Republican candidates is brighter to the historians of mental illness. Who is more qualified for the job is an open question, since Reagan says what Ford thinks. All that we can hope is that the voters will find neither appetizing, that they will reject the meaningless mumbleings of Reagan as well as the chaotic, senselessly destructive programs of Ford; but in an election, anything can happen. About the only element of

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certainty in this battle is that whichever of them wins, the Republican party—and the U.S.—loses, at a time when we cannot, by any standard, afford to do so.

## A Republican's Stand

By Andy May

Those of us in the Republican Party have fond memories of the last Presidential election year. Nixon managed to maneuver a Vietnam peace and push the economy into acceptable shape. McGovern, who rode through the primaries on a white horse, shifted to a mule for the general election, and by November, the race was a joke.

Sadly, 1976 will not be the same

by any means; Watergate, Castro, Angola, and Vale have perhaps ended what William Rusher called "the emerging Republican majority." All is not gloom, however, for the GOP, because the Democrats, even with their vaunted "veto proof" Congress, remain horribly fragmented and extremely short on leadership. If Ford, or even Reagan, should win this fall, the victory will be as much as anything by default.

Despite early name recognition problems, Jimmy Carter has emerged as the Democratic frontrunner.

Aside from his stunning dental work, Carter's most notable feature is that his sister is a faith healer. Clearly, both are chips off the same block; for Jimmy is something of a spiritual curer himself. He has an uncanny knack for saying nothing whatsoever and making his audience come away with a positive attitude.

Unfortunately for Mr. Carter, a nice smile and a way with words do not make a President. What the nation needs, even more than jobs and a strong defense, is a leader capable of administering competent and consistent policy. This leadership is not Carter's to provide. Time and again he has proven that a desire for votes far supercedes any logical, concerned issue position.

Carter's gubernatorial campaign, widely hailed as one of the dirtiest in Georgia history, was conducted under completely false pretenses. Carter ran by associating himself with Lester Maddox and George Wallace, thus taking advantage of racial prejudice, particularly in the Southern part of the state.

Upon his election, Carter proceeded to repudiate the position implied throughout the campaign by announcing that "racial prejudice in Georgia is dead." While racism is evil, it is curable; two-facedness is not. In believing Carter, are we being made fools just like those South Georgia rednecks who made him governor? I don't want to find out.

No one really knows about Jimmy Carter's stance on the important issues, least of all, probably himself. On the rare occasions when he will refer to specifics, it is only to out-promise an opposing candidate, as he did in Wisconsin by calling for larger milk subsidies. Carter may have charisma and style, but his record proves that he lacks the character so desperately needed in the Presidency.

At present, the White House is not inhabited by a great leader. In fact, Ford is the weakest President since World War II; but a weak President is not likely to do irreparable damage to the nation. Given what we know about Carter and Jackson, little leadership may be a better alternative than leadership in the wrong direction.



"Well, Mary Beth, although your aptitude scores are low, we certainly are interested in your credentials."

must keep in mind that this is only speculation as to what the new campus would be like since there are no concrete plans at this time.

Many will automatically argue that the presence of girls on the Big Red Campus will both lower our SAT score and academic standards. I categorically believe this to be false. For example, what better academic incentive would there be than to know that if one made the privilege list, he could spend his study hall periods outside with the warm sun, the green grass, the spring air, and women!

Seriously though, I cannot see that this coordinate education sys-

tem would have any effect on the academic standards of Montgomery Bell Academy. During the time a student is in class, the school would essentially be the same as it has always been. I reiterate that classes would not be coed. Thus, both distractions and inhibitions would be easily avoided. Moreover, rather than lowering the standards of the boys school, this new program would create a disciplined form of education for girls in Nashville.

Aside from these more controversial arguments of athletics and academics, there are many undeniably good facets of coordinate

education. MBA truly prepares its students for college academically, but it is a different story socially. A high percentage of MBA graduates go to coeducational universities. This new environment could be a difficult adjustment after four to six years in an all-male institution.

The new system would likely add to the personal happiness of each MBA student. Any normal person of high school age enjoys the companionship of members of the opposite sex. Thus, with coordinate education, MBA would be a more enjoyable and natural school to attend. The time has come for female students to ascend The Hill.

An interview with Heaven Lee

## "Everybody interests me"

By Carter Williams  
and Steven Zager

On a blistering day in the summer of 1972, a crowd gathered along the curbs of Fourth Avenue North amidst the shadows of the lofty financial institutions of the Wall Street of Nashville. Almost casually, a buxom young blonde mounted a horse *au naturel* and rode proudly erect on her noble steed through the sweltering city streets.

Word of the summer spectacle disseminated rapidly amongst the anxious multitude as a plethora of stockbrokers turned from the fluctuations of Dow Jones to the oscillations of Nashville's Lady Godiva.

Smiling proudly, the exotic equestrian recalls the experience as "something different." Indeed, the identity of our unmasked, undressed, and unabashed rider is Heaven Lee.

Thereafter, Heaven was destined for stardom, performing nightly at the Black Poodle in Printer's Alley. Well, me and Printer's Alley both . . . Well, I don't know what to tell you about that one. I guess that it is because my show is good enough that everybody came back to see me over and over again.

**Bell Ringer:** Doesn't it get dull, doing the same thing every night?

**Heaven Lee:** No, because everybody interests me. You know, I meet so many people from all over. How are you gonna get bored?

**Bell Ringer:** Do you consider your dancing an art form?

**Heaven Lee:** It is an art form in the way that I present it. I don't care about anyone else. My point of view is that before I leave the exotic field, I want everybody to

In our never-ending quest to fulfill the cultural void between the aesthetic and the practical, we embarked upon a journalistic odyssey to discover the mystery behind the flesh's alluring facade. Somewhat over-stuffed, boasting a team of three reporters, two photographers, and one camera, we ventured to the outskirts of Nashville to interview the self-styled queen of the exotic dancers.

Upon reaching our fabled destination, we were escorted by an Afghan hound into a diminutive facsimile of Jay Gatsby's home at West Egg. The site of the interview, a den overwhelmed by tropical greenery and a narcissistic multitude of mirrors, provided an incessant serenade of Afro-Cuban Freedom Music to entertain us as we awaited the arrival of the marini of terpsichorean delight.

Finally, we were graced by the appearance of Heaven Lee.

**Bell Ringer:** Could you describe yourself?

**Heaven Lee:** Yeah, I escaped from the communist country of Cuba. I escaped when I was seventeen years old, and I came to your country and went to New York City. I was a model in New York for two years, but me and my employer did not get along too well. Things started getting a little rough be-

I think that I am the queen of all the exotics and I have the authority to tell them what is right and what is wrong."

effective through the many images ("Bright storms, rising free forms, wild swans against the sun"). "Renegade," the best song on the album, features some pretty impressive personnel, including Charlie Daniels on electric guitar, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, and Tracy and Willie Nelson helping out on the vocals.

"Rhythm of the Road" is a nice bluegrass tune with particularly dexterous picking on the banjo and mandolin. "Pink Lady" has a blues quality displayed especially well on the keyboards: "Romance is her religion. She's been worshipping so long."

"Buffalo Gun" mourns the sense-

less killing of this animal in the Old West: "When a buffalo gun leveled from a train made them fall like rain to die." "Wild West Show" is a fast-paced tune featuring good keyboards: "Now it's just like the real thing. The Indians play dead (it's part of the deal.)"

Michael Dinner, a relative unknown, has recorded an album that is well worth checking out. **The Great Pretender**, categorized as progressive country, features the talent of some excellent musicians, many of whom perform with Jackson Browne.

The electric and steel guitars complement each other well along with the background harmony by

Linda Ronstadt, Doug Haywood, and Herb Pedersen: "I'm just a cardboard stuck with lies and crude deception, and I'm the only one who knows your name." "Yellow Rose Express" is a trucker's tune ("The diesel is my savior, the highway is my bride") dominated by Ed Black's steel guitar.

"Last Dance in Salinas" is a very nice tune with a country flavor, characterized by the acoustic and steel guitars and an excellent solo on the fiddle by David Lindsey. "Tattooed Man from Chelsea" is a fast-paced, rather satirical tune. Other songs worth mentioning include "Pentacost Lane," "Jamaica," "Woman of Aran," and "Icarus."



"I am smart enough to know what reality is. I know what it is and nobody is going to fool me."

**Bell Ringer:** Where do you plan to go from here?

**Heaven Lee:** Las Vegas. To have my own show. I've got a manager right now, and I just signed with him, and I never signed with anybody before. Now I've got a manager, a press agent, and a booking agency. I am going to leave Nashville in one or two months to go on the road.

**Bell Ringer:** Do you want to sing?

**Heaven Lee:** Yes, but it is not the right time. I went back to stripping after I started singing because I make \$65,000 a year as a stripper. I will go back to singing when it is the right time. I would like to break into movies and television, be more or less like a celebrity or an entertainer.

**Bell Ringer:** Are you bothered by the protests of moralists against your show and your way of life?



"My show is not dirty period. It is dirty maybe in peoples' imaginations. But, it is not dirty in my opinion."

**Heaven Lee:** They never bother me. They just like me I guess. April the 8th, I was invited to do an anti-communist speech at the Presbyterian Church in Clarksville, Tennessee.

**Bell Ringer:** Are you involved with the movement against communism?

**Heaven Lee:** Yes, of course I am because your country is already communist and you don't even know it. It is a working totality, socialist mainly.

**Bell Ringer:** Could you describe your involvement in the anti-communist movement?

**Heaven Lee:** Well, I saw so many starve. I am smart enough to know what is going on. I woke up to reality. I know what reality is and nobody is going to fool me. I just go and I speak, and they want to hear about who I am and what I have done, and I tell them. Then, after that, I give them a little about what I think about communism and the situation in this country.

**Bell Ringer:** What do you think about Nixon and Watergate?

**Heaven Lee:** Nixon? I don't like to talk about politics because to me it is zero. The politicians have done nothing for this country except create more problems and more misery. And it is all getting worse instead of getting better. People are losing their businesses. Everybody is going bankrupt these days, and that is because the communists are the big companies and the big people in this country. The big companies are communist-socialist; and they try to squeeze the middle class people, so that everybody will become poor and the government is going to be rich and have the control of everybody. And you know, when you have nothing, you are nothing!

**Bell Ringer:** What is your most embarrassing experience?

**Heaven Lee:** When a guy tries to become rough or wild. It is just when a guy sometimes gets very out of proportion. I mean excited or whatever you want to call it. Then I get embarrassed!

**Bell Ringer:** If you had your life to live again, would you live it the same way?

**Heaven Lee:** Yes, why not? I enjoy everything I do in life. If I know that I am not going to enjoy it, then I don't do it.

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## Murphy and Dinner score LP successes

By Ike Simon

During the past few years, Michael Murphy has come into his own. He particularly gained much recognition for his last album, **Blue Sky—Night Thunder**, which features "Wildfire." Murphy portrays his respect for the early American Indian (remember Geronimo's Cadillac?) and the Old West, themes which have characterized his previous albums.

However, in his latest effort, **Swans Against the Sun**, one can sense a desire to diversify a bit more through his incorporating a blues tune and some good ole Kentucky bluegrass. The title cut is

## Spring squads open seasons

The MBA spring sports program has met with mixed success thus far. The golf and tennis Varsity teams are undefeated, but the track and baseball Varsity squads have had difficulties in district competition.

### Golf

The golf team led by Danny Newman, Curt Cole, William Morgan, Grady Burrus, John Hamilton, and Robert Haley holds a 3-0 record with wins over Hillwood, Franklin, and Hillsboro.

A crucial 4½ to 2½ victory over a strong Overton squad improved the district hopes of the team.



Templeton strokes forehand in district match.

### Tennis

Under the leadership of Coach James Poston, the tennis team has thus far compiled a 4-0 record with wins over Stratford, Bellevue, and Hillwood and a 4-2 victory over Dupont.

The first five netters on the ladder include David Templeton, Captain Bobby Thym, Bill Calton, Bubby Evans, and Johnny Daniel, all of whom are still undefeated. The Big Red hopes to capture yet another NIL championship trophy, an award it has received for the last thirty out of thirty-one years.

### Track

The Varsity track squad showed inexperience and lack of depth in two opening losses to powerful Mt. Juliet and McGavock teams. How-

Newman tees off against Overton.

Montgomery Bell Academy restates its open admissions policy. Applicants are considered on the basis of academic ability and previous school record, regardless of race, creed, or color. Applications are available at the school office. Telephone: 298-5514.

## News capsules

### Journalism Convention

In the Tennessee High School Press Association's annual meeting held recently in Chattanooga, *The Bell Ringer* won a rating of superior, placing it in the top eleven papers in the state. John Rebrovick won first place in the features division; Ken Witt and Goeffrey Chazen won third.

### Art Shows

Two new art exhibits are in the library. Tom Walton, the art director of the Baptist Sunday School Board, has a sample of his paintings on the balcony. Borrowed

from several large local collections, his three-dimensional works in acrylic will stay until Thursday, April 29.

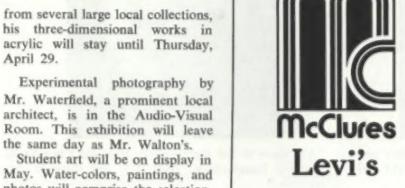
Experimental photography by Mr. Waterfield, a prominent local architect, is in the Audio-Visual Room. This exhibition will leave the same day as Mr. Walton's.

Student art will be on display in May. Water-colors, paintings, and photos will comprise the selection.

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ever, a solid 86-49 win over Franklin showed much progress on the part of the team, which must mature in time for the District meet on May 8.

Strong performances have been recorded in the discus throw by Ralph Moore and Rol Luplow. Also, Marcel Hawiger has shown promise in the high jump.

With regard to running events, the mile-relay team of John Rebrovick, Clay Whitson, Greg Bogle, and Hal West has scored several wins. Also, Rebrovick and Bogle have both picked up first place finishes in the 440 yard dash. Raymond Lackey has proved to be a mainstay in the shorter sprints, and Ken Witt has performed solidly in distance events.

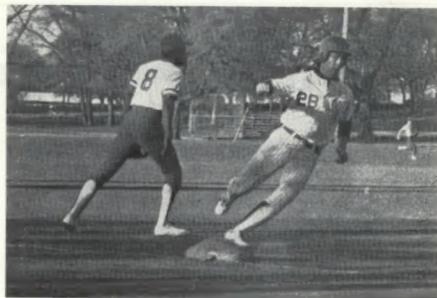


Rebrovick breaks the tape in a 440 against McGavock.

### Baseball

The Varsity baseball team's district hopes were dealt a severe blow after losses to Pearl (6-5) and to Bellevue (3-2).

After completing the presecon



Hill heads home in a closely fought contest with Pearl.

games held during spring vacation, the Big Red posted a perfect 4-0 record with wins over Cohn, Hendersonville, Madison, and Dickson County.

The victories resulted from the excellent pitching of Tom Tillman, Gage Whittier, Mike Ralston, and Barry Ralston combined with the consistent hitting and fielding of Steve Burch, Barry Duke, John Hill, Bill Smith, and Robert Holland.

*The Nashville Banner* has picked MBA first in the 24th District while *The Tennessean* has picked the Big Red second to Bellevue with Pearl and Ryan rounding out the top four teams. Coach Jim Jefferson believes that the winner of the 24th District could possibly have as many as four losses, owing to the balance of the league.



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